

CHARLESTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Fire Marshal Division

Information Bulletin

School Fire Safety Inspections



Periodic fire safety inspections will be conducted at educational facilities throughout the City so that we may assist you in ensuring a safe environment for the children of our Community. School fire safety is paramount in prevention of injuries and in the control of fires at your facility. Our goal is to work with you in developing and maintaining a fire safe environment while increasing your preparedness in the event an emergency.

The information contained within this document is intended to answer some common questions and identify specific issues related to educational occupancy inspections. This document is intended to assist you in gaining compliance but is not all-inclusive and should be used in conjunction with the IFC (International Fire Code), the commercial self-survey fire inspection form, and any additional forms or documents provided by school administration.

- 1) **Fire Drills** must be completed within the first 10 school days of each school year and then at a frequency of not less than one per month. The drills shall be held at unexpected times and under varying condition (different times, during the change of classes, etc.).
- 2) **Fire Drill Records** must identify the date and time of the drill, method of notification, person in charge, staff members participating, number of occupants evacuated, any special conditions or problems encountered, weather, and the time required to complete the evacuation. The records must be maintained on file for review.
- 3) **Fire Drill Evacuation Point** or an assembly waiting area should be away from the building and out of the way of the arriving emergency vehicles. Teachers should utilize an accountability system and report their results to a central point of contact. We recommend a color coded card system that each teacher would have available within their assigned emergency guide (Green = all students accounted for, Red = student(s) missing, Yellow = additional students with the group).
- 4) **Fire Safety and Evacuation Plan** is a written plan providing detailed directions to staff and students. A plan must be in place, available to employees, and submitted for review and approval by the fire code official. The plan must be updated at least once a year or as changes take place. One point of contact should represent the school during an emergency and provide updates to arriving emergency personnel.
- 5) **Fire Safety Plan Training Records** must be maintained by the school. This includes initial, refresher, and updated training sessions.
- 6) **Fire Safety Evacuation Routes** shall be posted in each classroom.
- 7) **Lockdown plans** must be developed in accordance with IFC section 404 and approved by the fire code official.

- 8) **Fire doors** must properly operate, close and latch fully, and cannot be held open by wood blocks or similar unapproved methods. Fire doors held open by devices connected to the building fire alarm system must function properly.
- 9) **Curtains or fabric** shall be labeled as fire retardant by the manufacturer, treated in accordance with NFPA 701 or must be constructed of non-combustible materials.
- 10) **Artwork and teaching materials** displayed on the walls of the corridors shall be limited to no more than 20% of the wall area.
- 11) The hanging and displaying of **decorative material from** acoustical ceiling systems that are part of the fire-resistance-rated ceiling is not allowed.
- 12) **Storage** must be orderly. Storage cannot be placed within 18" of the ceiling in buildings equipped with an automatic fire sprinkler system or 24" from a ceiling in a building without a fire sprinkler system.
- 13) **Extension cords** are only permitted for temporary use of portable items, such as a portable floor fan.
- 14) **Power strips** must include overcurrent protection and the cords cannot run under carpets, through walls or ceilings, and must be in good repair.
- 15) **Exit and Emergency lights** must be operational and must be activated monthly to verify operation. A power test must be conducted annually and the device operated for 90 minutes.

Please visit our website at www.charleston-sc.gov/fm or contact our office at 843-724-3429 for additional information.